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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews the history and present status of special education in Canada (with particular emphasis on the province of Ontario) and identifies recommended future directions. The legislative authority for special education and current policies are summarized in sections on the following provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland. A more detailed case study of Ontario describes: the 5-year phase-in period of the Education Amendment Act (1980) which gave legislative support to the rights of exceptional students; the need for a systematic means of ensuring program quality throughout the province; and current funding concerns. Future directions for special education in Canada are summarized for the following areas: program (calling for development of provincial criteria for program evaluation); early recognition and intervention (especially for the learning disabled); definitions and assessment (calling for an inter-provincial agreement on definiitions); teaching approaches; principals; integration (calling for better preparation of regular teachers to provide for exceptional students); the delivery system (special education needs to become a supportive system to regular education); the academically gifted and artistically talented; and preschool provision (few provinces currently provide services before age 5 and the need for expanding services to the preschool level is the most urgent need facing Canadian special education). (DB)

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Special Education in Canada Past, Present and Future

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SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CANADA PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

My intention, in this paper, is to present you with a sketch of special education in Canada; to offer the experience, in a particular area, of my own Province -- Ontario -- as a case study; and to indicate what must be done over the next few years if exceptional children in Canada are to receive the education they require.

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CANADA

Education in Canada is a Provincial responsibility. The 1867 British North America Act gave the Provinces of Canada exclusive jurisdiction over this domain, and each of the ten Provinces has, accordingly, developed its own legislation, policies, and procedures in special education as in other areas of education. Over the years more and more sharing of ideas and experience has occurred through organizations such as The Council for Exceptional Children and the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education. There are more commonalities among the Provinces in special education than ever before. Nevertheless, differences exist, and these give a special flavor to special education in each Province.

As a general rule, the philosophy of special education in Canada is considerably more enlightened than the legislative framework upon which it rests. This is because special education is a policy add-on to the body of legislation that exists for each school system as a whole. This in turn leads to a curious ambivalence in the language of policy. For example, British Columbia (B.C.), which has developed the most comprehensive policies, procedures, and guidelines for special education of all the Provinces, requires that special programs must be developed for students with special needs who cannot benefit from placement in regular classrooms. Although it would be logical to expect that such programs must be in the least restrictive environment appropriate to the child's needs, B.C.'s policy manual states only that this should be the case. Programs are established not only according to the needs of the child but also according to available resources.

British Columbia

Similarly, B.C.'s School Act, now under major revision, takes some of the steam out of the aspirations of special educators in that Province. School age is defined in the Act as over the age of 7 years and under the age of 15 years even if the actual special education provision operationally exceeds this range.

Like most other Provinces, B.C.'s special education provision is based on a variant of the cascade model of service delivery to exceptional children. Policy in the funding area, as in the rest

of Canada, is still to identify funding "in a categorical manner in order to secure the necessary resources." In other words, B.C. and the other Provinces still find it necessary to have visible special education funding to ensure that the needs of exceptional children are addressed. B.C. is unique among the Provinces, however, in specifically articulating both a philosophy of special education and the goals and objectives for its Special Education Division. Although all the Provinces have by now developed and published goals of education for their school systems, only B.C. developed and enshrined in policy, however 'soft' in certain areas, a comprehensive set of beliefs and objectives for special education.

These objectives embody collaborative approach to special education, typifying the way Canada as a whole approaches special education.

School boards or districts deliver service and Provincial Ministries of Education seek to assist them in providing all necessary special programs and services. B.C. is, however, in a transitional stage, seeking to go beyond this collegial, cooperative approach to "review, monitor, and evaluate educational programs and services for exceptional children, and to ensure accountability to established standards, guidelines, and levels of resource allocations." Its major effort in this domain is its attempt to develop, at the Provincial level, evaluation criteria for special education programs and services. No other ministry or department of education has yet sought to address this problem in the systematic, prescriptive manner planned in B.C.

This venture will presumably have implications for planning. At the present time, planning in special education in B.C. is expected but not legislatively mandated. The Special Education Division only encourages school districts to develop comprehensive plans for special programs and services, although "the endorsement of these plans by parents, teachers, administrators, and trustees is seen as critical to the success of program initiatives."

Organizationally, it is notable that special education at the Provincial level in B.C. does have the status of a Division, with an Executive Director of Special Education overseeing the activities of five separate branches each with its own Director. The Division was established "to give the education of exceptional children a very clear and identifiable focus." No other Province gives divisional status to special education. One, or at the most two branches represent the norm.

Funding for special programs in B.C. is provided through a Financial Management System (FMS) based on provincially established definitions of educational activity designed to generate consistent funding for these activities in all school districts. Every district receives between 60% and 95% of the

funds required for its approved budget through taxes collected by the Province. The amount depends on the district's ability to raise school taxes.

In order to receive these funds, school districts are required to operate their special education programs in accordance with the policies, procedures, and guidelines in the manual. Program monitoring and auditing by the Province are features of the system, but its new evaluation criteria project strongly suggests inadequacy in this area. In addition, each district is required to submit annually (by June 30) a Special Programs Status Report on programs operated and funded in accordance with Ministry guidelines. Districts are required to provide information on the results of the special programs and services delivered by the district. Major areas of Ministry interest and concern are program evaluation and student assessment.

B.C. provides program guidelines for special education in each of the following categories:

- o Moderately Mentally Handicapped (TMH)
- o Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped
- o Physically Handicapped
- o Visual Impairment
- o Hearing Impairment
- o Autistic
- o Severe Learning Disabilities
- o Mildly Mentally Handicapped (EMH)
- o Severe Behavior Problems
- o Rehabilitation
- o English-as-a-Second Language/Dialect
- o Indian Education
- o Gifted Education
- o Hospital
- o Homebound

These categories, with the exception of English-as-a-Second Language and Indian Education, are representative of those in the other Provinces. In B.C., however, the definitions in each category are generally more detailed than elsewhere, and guidelines for identification and placement are provided. The appropriate program and service delivery approach are indicated; evaluation methods are suggested; and program personnel, resources, facilities, and available consultation services are identified for each category. This constitutes the most comprehensive attempt in Canada to provide direction to school districts in the various categories of special education.

The approach extends to special services, including special health services (speech pathology and other programs). Detailed direction is also provided in the generic areas of assessment, programming, in-service, school-based administration, learning assistance (mild learning problems) and severe handicaps. In addition, a number of circulars have been issued to the field to

indicate or clarify policy in various special education areas.

Alberta

Education in Alberta is governed by The School Act. Little reference is made to exceptional students or to special education in the Act. School age is 6 to 16 years, although pupils have the right to attend school until they are 18. Attendance beyond the age of 18 is at the discretion of the individual school board. Boards are required to provide special education "in a special class or by entering the child in a special school or in any other suitable manner." Unlike in B.C., which has thus far resisted this type of provision, a board or a parent may place an exceptional pupil in a private school and receive Provincial funding for the placement. For the past several years, however, this funding has been pegged at the 1983 rates which suggests a certain lack of enthusiasm in Alberta for funding exceptional pupils to attend special private schools.

Special Education in Alberta is called, at the Provincial level, the Special Needs Program, and it consists of two services -- Early Childhood Services (ECS) and Special Education. ECS is a voluntary program directed at the integration of educational, health, recreational, and social services for children younger than school age. Children with special needs are eligible for the program up to three years prior to school entrance. All other children are eligible for it one year prior to starting school. Operators of ECS programs may be school boards of nonprofit, community-based societies. The Ministry of Education regional offices of ducation monitor the programs as required.

Important though this program can be in the lives of exceptional children it is not mandated. Again, this ambivalence towards mandatory special education, so characteristic of Canada's school system is expressed in Alberta's Program Policy Manual, which states that "through special funding from Alberta Education, school boards (are) encouraged to establish special education programs." According to the provision of The School Act cited previously, this is something that school boards must, in fact, do.

Alberta is committed to the cascade model: individualization, community focus for special education, parent involvement, developmental focus, integrative curriculum, and a diagnostic teaching approach. This approach identifies skills, or the lack of them, on the basis of observable, measurable behaviors, rather than in terms of inferred cognitive, perceptual, or affective states or processes. This pragmatic approach is designed to lead to real-time, on-line prescription and evaluation and to avoid speculative practices.

Special purpose grants (e.g., Learning Disabilities Fund) were a feature of Alberta education until quite recently. However, the

funding trend is away from special purpose grants and toward block funding. Where special purpose funding continues, e.g., for parent placements, it has been reduced.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan's Education Act defines a "handicapped pupil" as a pupil who is unable to participate at an optimal level in the benefits of the ordinary program of the school by reasons of personal limitations attributable to sensory defects, mental retardation, communications disorders, neurological, orthopedic or physical impairment, or behavioral disorders.

A board of education must provide educational services for handicapped pupils, but the board may, "where it is considered advisable, exclude from attendance in a specific curricular program any pupil who, in the opinion of the director or superintendent, is incapable of responding to instruction in that program, or whose presence is detrimental to the education and welfare of other pupils in attendance in that program." However, the board must ensure that alternative educational services are provided for such excluded pupils.

Where a pupil is so seriously handicapped as to be unable to benefit from any of the instructional services provided by the board, consultation with parents must occur, and the board must make available any of its consultant services that may be of assistance and arrange other services appropriate to the pupil's needs and circumstances. These may include the pupil's school, other facilities operated by the board, or services operated by another board of education, agency, institution, or person. Where provision is made in a special institution in Saskatchewan or out-of-province, departmental approval is required, and the board is responsible for payment of all or a portion of the cost of maintenance, tuition, transportation, and support of the pupil as prescribed in the regulations. Responsibility for the pupil remains with the board in which his or her parents reside.

In Saskatchewan, every person between the ages of 6 and 21 has the right to attend school "and to receive instruction appropriate to his age and level of educational achievement." Where a pupil is deemed to have special needs, the appropriate board of education official (Director, Superintendent, or Supervisory Officer) is the key player in the pupil's future, since the Education Act requires this official, upon referral from the school principal, to conduct "such study and evaluation as the circumstances warrant." Parent access to this process is through the school principal, who is not obligated to make a referral at the request of a parent, but who may "determine the nature of the action to be taken on such request."

Where the referral has been made, the board official responsible must direct such studies, evaluation, and diagnostic procedures as may be appropriate. The official must also confer with the

principal, teacher, parent, or pupil, "or any of them concerning the results of the investigations and the recommendations for changes in the pupil's educational program."

Special provisions are available for gifted pupils at the discretion of the board of education. Mandatory provision for exceptional pupils is confined to those considered to be handicapped.

The Education Act prescribes a process for mediating conflict and dispute involving a pupil, but appeal procedures respecting "designation" or placement of a handicapped pupil are set out in the special education regulations.

In the regulations under the Education Act, definitions of handicapped pupils are set out. Saskatchewan is unique among the provinces in adopting a highly prescriptive, psychometric approach towards definition. Saskatchewan is thus more closely aligned with certain American models than any other Canadian jurisdiction.

Handicapped pupils are subdivided into "high-cost handicapped pupils" and "low-cost handicapped pupils." The latter means pupils with mild to moderate handicapping conditions who require appropriate special education services but who do not meet the criteria for designation as high-cost handicapped pupils. These criteria are sufficiently different from Canadian practice elsewhere to give an example here:

> Severely Learning Disabled: When assessment by qualified personnel affirms that the child is (1) between the ages of 5 years 8 months and 16 years 0 months, (2) has an intelligence quotient of 85 or higher, as measured by an approved test; (3) that there is significant discrepancy, one standard deviation or greater, between aptitude and achievement, and (4) the average rate of progress in the skill subjects, including reading, is not greater than half that of average students as measured by approved achievement tests.

Instructions on how to implement this definition occupy almost three pages of Saskatchewan's policy manual.

Manitoba

The legislative basis for the provision of special education programs and services in Manitoba is constituted mainly in three short sections of The Public Schools Act, 1980. The Manitoba Department of Education interprets these sections as mandating the provision of special educational programming for school divisions and districts. However, since Manitoba's Public Schools Act has not been proclaimed, this province cannot be listed as one operating under mandatory legislation.

In Manitoba, as in Saskatchewan, exceptional pupils are classified into two basic categories, high incidence support and low incidence support. High incidence means a program of support for the provision of resource teachers, occupational entrance teachers, special class teachers, teachers of the gifted, and teacher aides (and related costs). The amount of this special education support is allocated in units of $20,000, the number of units being based on pupil enrollment (i.e., 150 - 300 = 1 unit, 301 - 450 = 2 units, 451 - 750 = 3 units, and so on, according to a scale set out in the regulation).

Low incidence support is subdivided into Low Incidence I Pupils: those who are "trainable mentally handicapped, moderately multi-handicapped, severely physically handicapped, severely learning impaired, severely visually impaired, very severely learning disabled or very severely emotionally disturbed" - and Low Incidence II Pupils: those who are "severely multi-handicapped, severely psychotic or autistic, or profoundly deaf." Where a division provides special assistance for these pupils, the province provides $3,300 for each Low Incidence I Pupil and $6,600 for each Low Incidence II Pupil. The regulation further states that "the decision of the Minister or his designate as to the classification of a pupil as either a Low Incidence I Pupil or Low Incidence II Pupil is final....".

Manitoba's special education policy is articulated as follows:

> Since each child in the Province has the right to develop to the fullest extent possible as a confident and valued member of our society, there is a responsibility for the provincial government and those who provide educational services in the public school system to ensure that the child with special needs has an equal opportunity to receive a meaningful and appropriate program.
>
> For a large proportion of children with special needs this goal is best accomplished by placement within the regular program stream. Social interaction with other students in a normal environment is considered to be a vital part of the educational curriculum. In order to enable this to occur, additional supports are required, and provided, to enable children with special needs to benefit fully from their experiences in the regular classroom. A small proportion of the population has exceptional needs which are so significant that a higher level of resources is necessary because of the extensive nature of the program modifications required.

Manitoba funds small special class groupings for these students but cautions that they should not become locked into "the entire scope of the timetable" in such special settings. Similarly, the identification of students' learning "conditions" should not

become a negative process. "The handicapping conditions listed in the regulations of the Public Schools Act are intended to serve as examples of the severe disabilities experienced by children who require considerable modifications or supports to their program. It is not necessary to attach such labels to individual students for funding purposes. It is essential to determine the level of need presented by the student and to plan and implement the program modification which will meet that need." Further, it is Manitoba policy that where the child is placed - in a specialized setting or a regular classroom - is not a criterion for determining eligibility for low-incidence funding.

The Manitoba government places "great emphasis" on the continued development of a comprehensive service delivery system to meet the needs of children with special needs. Parent and community involvement in this process is considered essential.

Quebec

Quebec's education legislation entitles every individual of school age to free public education and to "benefit from a system of education that fosters the full development of his personality." Exceptional pupils are not, however, specifically identified in Quebec's education laws.

In Quebec, appropriate measures of aid for children with difficulties must be established. For these children the Department of Education fosters access to a public education system that provides quality education in as normal a setting as possible. It is departmental policy that children with severe adjustment or learning difficulties should find in the public school system the appropriate educational, remedial, and rehabilitative services. However, those who are unable to benefit from the services available in the school system may be provided for by the Ministere des Affaires Sociales. Close collaboration exists between Education and Affaires Socials; school boards are responsible for directing a child with difficulties to the appropriate service.

Although Quebec seeks to ensure that exceptional pupils are appropriately served, many policy areas (e.g., identification and assessment) are still in the process of development.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick's Auxiliary Classes Act permits, but does not require the establishment of auxiliary classes to provide courses of instruction and training for the mental and physical development of children who are, from any physical or mental cause, unable to take proper advantage of the public school courses provided for under the Schools Act. New Brunswick has also entered into an agreement, under the Education of the Aurally or

Visually Handicapped Act, with the other Atlantic provinces for the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority and resource centers, providing for educational programs and services for handicapped persons in those provinces.

Basically, New Brunswick's legislation provides for the "visible handicaps" (mental retardation, physical handicap, and visual and auditory impairment) and for children with mental health problems. This is reflected in the admission criteria for auxiliary classes. The Auxiliary Classes Act states that "no child shall receive instruction or training under this Act unless such instruction or training is recommended for the child (1) by the director of a mental health clinic in New Brunswick, or (2) by a medical practitioner who is employed on a full-time basis in the public service of the Province and designated for the purpose by the Minister of Health." The Regulations further specify that "no person shall be a member of an auxiliary class until: (1) a qualified medical practitioner has examined him and submitted a report of the examination to a Director: (2) qualified personnel at a Mental Health Clinic have assessed him and made a report to the Director: (3) the Director has recommended to the Director of Mental Health Services that he receive instruction or training under the Act and: (4) the Minister has submitted to the society the name of the person as one recommended for membership in an auxiliary class."

In 1974, a White Paper entitled Opportunities for the Handicapped was issued. The special education component of the paper stated that provision in New Brunswick should be made for all handicapped children in need of educational progr ms and service, regardless of the handicapping condition or the geographical location of the pupil's residence. However, New Brunswick's legislation indicates a considerably more restricted approach than this global mission statement.

Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia every person over 5 and under 21 has the right to attend school. The Regulations require each school board to "provide for all pupils resident in the municipality, city or town who are qualified to pursue the studies in the grades or courses for which they are enrolled," including "instruction for physically or mentally handicapped children." Nova Scotia's legislation therefore gives the individual school boards responsibility to provide programs for children with "visible" handicaps. However, children who are severely learning disabled (as well as those with severe visual and hearing handicaps) may be provided for by the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority.

Under the Regulations, a child may be excluded from school if, among other reasons:

> The physical condition of the child is such as to render his attendance at, or instruction in, school inexpedient or impractical;...
> The mental condition of the child is such as to render his attendance at, or instruction in, school inexpedient or impractical.

The Handicapped Persons Education Act provides that the parent or guardian of every person considered to be a (visibly) handicapped person shall notify the superintendent of schools serving the area in which the person resides of the name, address, and age of such handicapped person. The superintendent of schools is then required to immediately arrange for an educational assessment of the handicapped person.

Special education policy in Nova Scotia is that school boards are to provide programs for children in need of special education. Special education in Nova Scotia schools consists of educational programs and/or services designed to meet the particular needs of children and youth who differ from the norm in any school system to such an extent that they require additional and/or different school methodology, curriculum, and/or services in order to develop to their maximum.

Placement in a class designated as special should take place only after a case conference has been held with appropriate personnel and every alternative means of programming has been discussed. Every two years, or more frequently if required, it is policy that the students concerned should be formally reassessed. Whenever it appears advantageous to the pupil, he or she should be referred to the regular program totally or in part. It is also policy that every child referred for special education in Nova Scotia should have an appropriate diagnostic assessment by a qualified examiner. The individual assessment should include a standard measure of general intelligence, diagnostic educational measurements, and measurements of perception and motor functioning, the last two depending on the child's needs. In its policy statement on special education, Nova Scotia considers it desirable for children to be tested for any hearing or vision defects which could depress the results of any aspects of the educational assessment or inhibit the child's educational development. In addition, any medical problems or conditions should be made known to the school authorities.

Prince Edward Island

At the present time, Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) has no written legislation concerning special education. P.E.I.'s legislation simply states that the education system is responsible for the "education of all children from 6 to 21 years of age who have not completed high school."

No policy statement currently exists on special education, although steps are being taken to develop one.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland's Schools Act requires every school board to organize the means of instructing children who for any physical or mental cause require special classes, either by the establishment of special classes in its schools or by making arrangements with another school board or within any educational body or authority within Canada for the education of such children; i.e., the legislation provides for those students with "visible" handicaps.

Newfoundland's legislation, per se, is similar in most respects to the other three Atlantic provinces. However, the Schools Act has a special provision for "extra-perceptual" (blind and deaf) children. It empowers the Minister to permit, in writing, admission to a specified school of children younger than 6 years if it is shown to his satisfaction that sufficient extra-perceptual children will attend to warrant such permission being given.

Moreover, in 1982, in a notable development, Newfoundland changed its regulations to allocate salary units "for pupils who, in the opinion of the Minister, are unable to benefit properly from normal classroom instruction." This is an all-inclusive provision, embracing every category of special needs students.

In the policy area, Newfoundland's Department of Education is in the process of formulating a handbook of policy statements.

Ontario: A Case Study

Ontario has the most comprehensive special education legislation in Canada. The Education Amendment Act, 1980 (Bill 82) requires that the Minister of Education "shall ensure that all exceptional children in Ontario have available to them.....appropriate special education programs and special education services without payment of fees.....and provide for the parents or guardians to appeal the appropriateness of the special education placement." For these purposes, the Minister shall "require school boards to implement procedures for early and ongoing identification of the learning abilities and needs of pupils, and shall prescribe standards in accordance with which such procedures be implemented; and, in respect of special education programs and services, define exceptionalities of pupils, and prescribe classes, groups or categories of exceptional pupils, and require boards to employ such definitions or use such prescriptions....."

Special education in Ontario has a long and eventful history, from its beginnings with the establishment of the Toronto School

for the Deaf in 1858 to the great era of expansion of special education programs from 1950 onwards. However, Bill 82 is arguably the most significant event that has occurred in special education in Ontario because, for the first time, the rights of exceptional students were enshrined in legislation. It is not surprising that in Ontario, as in other jurisdictions which have mandated special education, considerable controversy swirled around the bill; on at least one occasion the government of the day seriously considered "pulling" it. It eventually passed, with all-party support in the Legislature of Ontario, in a form that was generally acceptable to the education system and its clients, although that acceptance ranged from enthusiastic support to grudging acknowledgment of the inevitability of some such measure.

It is instructive to examine the dynamics of this situation and to identify the factors that resulted in consensus, no matter how fragile that consensus may have been.

First, Bill 82 came about as a result of intensive advocacy on the part of parent groups. Professional organizations like C.E.C. played a role, but a less vocal one. Societal changes occurring in the 1960's which led to Public Law 94-142 in the U. S. were somewhat muted in Ontario. What happened in the United States happened in Ontario, but in a more moderate form. In Ontario, more moderate means more appropriate. In Ontario in the latter part of the 1970's, people were talking about avoiding the "excesses" of P.L. 94-142. They meant avoiding excessive regulation and the accompanying avalanche of paperwork.

However, some parent groups lobbied ceaselessly and nearly succeeded in getting a P.L. 94-142 look-alike bill. When Bill 82 received a second reading it actually contained large chunks taken verbatim from the American legislation. The final product represented a compromise between the gentle nudge the Minister had in mind and the hard shove some of the advocacy groups demanded.

It was, appropriately, a learning experience. Fortunately, we got some good advice from some excellent planners at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education who suggested that change has to be prepared for; it cannot simply be legislated. So we arranged for a phase-in of our legislation over a five-year period, on the basis of a centrally orchestrated planning process.

If we have not gone as far and as fast as some of us would have liked, I hate to think where we would be now without the board planning process we instituted. True, its limitations are everywhere evident. It focused on the easy factors-physical facilities, staffing, professional development plans, statistics, and the like, leaving programming largely subject to local whim and circumstance. In other words, it was a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach, administrative rather than clinical.

It did provide the organizational infrastructure that will now permit us to focus on the program quality issue. This is not to suggest that program quality is uniformly poor. We know that there are many effective special education programs in our school system. We just don't have a systematic means of ensuring program quality; this means that, in certain situations, programs of doubtful quality may continue.

In a school system of 1,800,000 students, with over 250,000 receiving some form of special help, and 130,000 specifically identified as exceptional pupils, the smallest margin of program inefficiency affects the lives of a great many. Apart from this "clinical" issue there is always the dollar question. Ontario puts at least as much money as any other jurisdiction into special education in terms of funding, and we really don't know how big a bang we're getting for our buck. We can no longer say that, if everything appears calm out there, there's no problem and everything must be going along just fine; we know that is not the case. For every parent who complains and kicks up a fuss there are ten or a hundred who are not satisfied but don't complain, for a variety of reasons. Client satisfaction is a poor measure of effectiveness because parents, in Ontario at least, do not interact with their school system in the same way they interact with their supermarket manager or their newspaper carrier.

There needs to be central direction again in Ontario, but in the program quality domain. The nature of this central direction is of critical importance, and I shall address it in some detail later.

As my comments will suggest, another lesson that we learned from Bill 82 is that the education system does not typically reform or improve itself. Systems evolve routines, and routines are established ways of doing things - that is, with a minimum of thought. We should not come down too hard on this because organizational stability is essential if we are to get anything done collectively. However, the stability we should be after is of a particular type, not rigid and unyielding, but characterized by a sound organizational infrastructure. Such an infrastructure, by establishing appropriate procedures for such areas as communication, should render them automatic so that the real job of the schools can go on. Unfortunately, without central direction, this type of infrastructure will never develop uniformly. It is human nature to avoid the tough problem (program quality) and to devote disproportionate attention to the easy one (the paperwork, the number of paper clips required for the coming fiscal year, the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin). It is then even easier to complain that you can't do your real job because you're swamped with paperwork and all the other stuff.

So, if anything is to be done to take Ontario where it can and should go, it has to come from the center. If this really is the

age of the technocrat, we in education have to exercise our technical skills. We have to say in Ontario "Bill 82 is dead, long live Bill 82." The old style politics of special education reform must become as dead as the proverbial doornail, and we must preside over its demise by making it unnecessary. This requires planning, especially the kind of planning that nails avoidance techniques and excuses by keeping things as simple as possible. I don't mean simple-minded, because special education has its complexities. But these complexities are not difficulties of the order of quantum physics. They are to do with children, and with all our advanced degrees, surely we know by now what we can do, and what we should do, for them. Our greatest obstacle, in my view, is the "games people play"-the territorial disputes, the paper chase, and all the other manifold avoidance techniques, I believe these can be skewered by sweet reason. That reason, however, has to come from the top.

At this point I should probably deal with the resources issue because this was one of the two issues (the other was litigation) that obsessed education officials in Ontario when Bill 82 was in development. Perhaps Ontario is unique in this, but during the 1970's there was more Provincial money available for special education than was being spent. Some of the boards who were loudly voicing concerns about costs were the very boards who were not using the maximum amounts of Provincial grants available to them. In Ontario these were and are not percentage or partial grants, but grants to cover 100% of the cost of providing special education programs and services. Bill 82, as it turned out, forced boards to use these grants. In other words, it forced them to serve their exceptional pupils.

The funding issue, which still bubbles along like an ever-simmering pot, will always be on one or another of our burners, but it is, I think, in the paper category. The fact is, the funding issue in Ontario is another manifestation of "the will to do the job" issue. Will is the basic issue. The boards I've referred to did not have the will or the desire to do the job before 1980, but now Bill 82 has told them to do it, at least on some fronts. They have complied with the law on these fronts, and now they need to be told how to do the rest of it, with whom, and by when. This centrist approach is necessary not because boards are no longer willing to do the job, but because with certain kinds of exceptional students (the learning disabled, for example) they really don't know what the best practice is; we haven't done the greatest job in telling them. That, happily, is changing. They can expect a great deal more direction in the near future, and many of them will now welcome it. Our challenge, in the various projects we are completing in this area, is to avoid pushing them back into the avoidance trap by papering things up, or over.

A number of other issues are characteristic of Ontario's experience, but they are perhaps more traditional special education issues than the organizational change issues in this

case study. I shall therefore address them in the next and last part of this paper. Nevertheless, without an understanding of the way education systems behave, and what we have to do to change them, all that follows is wasted breath. If the foundation is not secure we have no chance of making the rest of the building sound.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CANADA

Although it has been controversial, Bill 82 represents a significant step forward in providing for exceptional students in Ontario. By requiring boards, for the first time, to provide appropriate special education programs and services for all exceptional students, the legislation generated much discussion and considerable activity at the delivery level. Whether or not the other Provinces follow Ontario's example, there are nine critical areas in which action must be taken across Canada, including Ontario, if exceptional children are to be appropriately and effectively served.

Program

Nothing makes Provincial Ministries of Education more nervous in the special education area than talk of legislating program accountability. This issue has, as a result, been avoided. Since Ministers of Education are ultimately responsible for education, they are ultimately responsible for ensuring program quality. However, the mechanism whereby Ministers do this ensuring is nowhere specified. The argument that they fulfill this responsibility by providing the necessary resources to boards for appropriate programs is insubstantial. Clearly they have a responsibility to ensure that the delivery system is effective. The means of accomplishing this include:

1. Revision of legislation to make program appealable;
2. Instituting provincial systems of inspection;
3. Developing provincial criteria for evaluation of special education programs.

Of these three alternatives, the first is likely to prove the least satisfactory. The courts in Canada, as in the United States, show a marked disinclination to rule on educational matters, arguing that the education profession is responsible for putting its own house in order. Since any appeal process inevitably assumes legalistic dimensions, the appropriateness of special education tribunals to rule on appropriateness of program is open to question, even where such tribunals include professional educators. Such bodies are too far removed from the operational context to perform much more than a paper appraisal of the situation.

There has been increasing pressure from some provincial advocacy groups for Ministries of Education to exercise more "clout" with school boards to ensure they provide appropriate programs for

exceptional students. The Association for Children with Learning Disabilities have been increasingly vocal in this regard and have called for (unspecified) penalties to be applied to boards which do not deliver the goods. In similar vein, an enhanced role for Ministry Regional Offices has been called for; the current consultative, intermediary role performed by officials in these offices is considered inadequate in the most difficult cases (i.e., those which generate the most publicity).

An enhanced role for regional offices would inevitably require a return to the inspectorate role common in the 1960's and abandoned because of its inherent difficulties. Any return to an inspection system would be viewed as "turning the clock back" by the education system as a whole. The possibility of a limited inspection role - limited, that is, to specific conflict over programs for exceptional students between parents and school boards - is as alluring as it is unrealistic. It is unlikely that any system of inspection could be confined to this one small area of education. The Ministries are therefore unlikely to open the inspection door, since they lack the resources to undertake systematic inspection of all areas of education.

The most feasible approach is the development of Provincial criteria for the evaluation of special education programs and services. As previously noted, British-Columbia - without mandatory special education - has already initiated a project of this nature and Ontario is likely to follow suit in the near future. By developing such criteria, and requiring boards to utilize them, Provincial Ministries would preserve the important principle of local accountablility while ensuring a measure of desirable, province-wide consistency in terms of quality of special education programs and services. Parent groups and special education advisory committees would be in a position to monitor board provision on the basis of these criteria rather than responding to criticisms of the quality of board provision in the ad hoc manner that often prevails now.

Program quality will clearly be one of the two core issues for the next decade. With a range of provision largely in place, it is already the greatest challenge facing Ministries of Education and school boards. It is as significant as it is encouraging that teacher organizations are among those calling for provincial standards in the program area.

Early Recognition and Intervention

Most of the Provinces require that school boards implement procedures for early and ongoing identification of the learning abilities and needs of pupils. Recent criticisms of school boards' early identification practices have centered around the perceived inability of early identification procedures to "pick up" learning disabilities. It is alleged that many learning disabled children go unrecognized and unassisted for several years in the school system, resulting in increasing frustration,

difficulty, and damage to them and their parents. The fact that this criticism is emerging primarily from one special interest group is not justification for ignoring it - students with learning disabilities now constitute the largest single category of exceptional students in most provinces. It has been argued, however, that although it is possible to measure the "visible" handicaps with some accuracy, the "invisible" handicaps do not readily lend themselves to psychometric, or other, assessment, particularly at the time of school entry. Developmental patterns evident at that time may or may not persist; since children progress at different rates, and, during the learning process, normally exhibit characteristics that, if they persist, are deemed abnormal, the assessment function, so the argument runs, becomes virtually impossible to carry out with any certainty. It is no consolation to parents, however, to be told to"wait and see" in the hope that their child may "grow out of it." This merely increases parents' frustration and, if the child indeed has learning disabilities, results in anger against the school system for wasting years of the child's life "doing nothing." A specific procedure to detect learning problems early is accordingly called for.

Contrary to the beliefs of those who counsel delay, there are means of ensuring that children with learning disabilities and other learning problems are detected early. These means must become widely used across Canada over the next few years. Such early screening must take place during the spring in Kindergarten, be comprehensive but simple to undertake, and consume little time so that all kindergarten students can be screened.

If problem areas show up following administration of the screening device, the parents must be notified and informed that the child will be carefully taught and monitored in these areas. If the problems persist, a detailed assessment must then be conducted in mid-Grade 1.

Given the current organization of schooling in Canada, it is only by taking such specific, measured, and immediate action that school systems can begin to serve exceptional children appropriately.

Definitions and Assessment

Definitions of exceptionality vary significantly from province to province. In some instances, a great deal of unnecessary, unproductive effort is expended in attempting to quantify all types of exceptionality. In others, the psychometric approach to definition has been used only for the "visible" handicaps, but the consequent open-endedness of the remaining definitions has left the field wide open for school boards to define each exceptionality virtually as they wish. This can lead to absurd consequences; for example, a child may be gifted in one board but not in the next.

Clearly, Canada needs to come to terms with the definitional issue once and for all. The most appropriate approach is to pinpoint educational needs and abilities through a multi-dimensional educational assessment process (informal teacher assessment and standardized educational assessment). Skills, aptitudes and interests should be carefully evaluated and educational decisions (following consultation with the parents) should follow from them.

The role of psychological assessment is problematic since we know that IQ can change and be changed. Although it has always been considered essential to determine "potential," many exceptional children do poorly on psychological tests because of cultural and other factors; these tests therefore discriminate against them. Many teachers have been surprised at the progress supposedly retarded or slow children have made, and our society has its full share of achievers who were written off by the school system. The issue of psychological assessment and arbitrary IQ cut-offs for placement purposes needs to be addressed across Canada as a whole.

Teachers should be trained to understand that definitions are simply a means of grouping, since grouping is one of the essential skills of teaching. However, our current definitions are so crude that it is time to go beyond them to a more sophisticated, fine-tuned approach that is more sensitive to individual differences.

Because definitions vary from school board to school board and from province to province, but children are basically the same from Kamloops to Come-By-Chance, an ideal solution to the definitional problem would be an inter-provincial agreement on this issue. An initial step in this direction might be the organization of a Canada-wide conference on special education by CEC, with the definitional issue a priority on the agenda.

Teaching Approaches

Effective teaching and effective special education are synonymous. Teachers of exceptional students should exhibit the characteristics of exemplary practitioners. A current study of special education in Ontario (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), 1986) is already suggesting that such teachers:

> subscribe to a fully individualized process in which the cycle of objective-setting, program adjustment, and evaluation is followed. The teacher is aware of external program recommendations, and after conducting in-class diagnostic assessments, gauges their relevance, supplementing overly generalized recommendations with his/her own specific program objectives. A variety of groupings are used, including full class, small group and individualized settings and timetabling, and organization of students is generally controlled by the

> teacher's assessment of pupils' program needs. Objectives are specific, timebound, based on diagnosis, and monitored/adjusted continuously. They are also reflective of the longer range program goals set for each student, these being also monitored on a periodic basis. The selection of teaching techniques and materials is controlled by the objectives and goals for each student. The teacher is alert to the overall impact of the program on the student, and adjusts strategies, or the program, if, for example he or she finds that the student's overwhelmed by resource withdrawal or rotary timetabling, or is insufficiently integrated. The teacher is also aware of the student's strengths and weaknesses within each subject/program area, at the same time being alert to any changes in this "profile". External resources are utilized in an integral fashion to obtain feedback and support and to facilitate problem solving on an ongoing basis. Where classroom assistants are utilized, their role is planned as an integral part of program modification, and, where the capability of the assistant has been demonstrated, he or she is used as a planning and individualization resource.

Teachers who fit this description are clearly cognitive in their approach. The analytic skills of these teachers, and their ability to structure student learning in decisive and specific ways, are crucial to their effectiveness. The affective dimension is not ignored, but it is not evaluated to a supreme position in the classroom, either - it is simply, and properly, accepted as a given. Caring and nurturing are qualities that the teacher must possess in order to be a teacher, they are not teaching methods. It is by the specific teaching methods, or strategies, that teachers employ to develop the skills of students that students learn. The students, in turn, as a direct result of their growing skills and understanding, experience growth in confidence, and this translates into improved self-concept. There is therefore not one curriculum, but two - the explicit curriculum (skills) and the implicit curriculum (enhanced self-image). It is a distinct characteristic of effective special education programs that the first is seen as the priority, since without it the second cannot properly develop.

Principals

Principals must become the curriculum leaders in our schools. The OISE research finds that:

> Although the principal has quantitatively more responsibilities in areas such as delivery model modifications and implementation, professional development, leadership, and communication, he or she has responsibilities in the program area that

are equally, or more, extensive. The principal who has fully implemented special education programming in his or her school ensures that program planning involves several levels of expertise, carefully reviewed and that program objectives relate to student needs and teacher development, and have specific time frames and strategies for implementation. Where integration of exceptional students in the regular program occurs, this is arranged according to individual strengths and needs, and supported by careful planning.

Integration

There is considerable evidence that regular classroom teachers are inadequately prepared and/or motivated for integration, and are increasingly questioning the feasibility of teaching exceptional students in classes of 30 to 40 regular students. Since there is strong evidence that it is feasible, the issue is therefore one of professional development of regular classroom teachers. The current (and perhaps understandable) situation of regular classroom teachers being last on the list for professional development in special education must therefore radically change. This may, in fact, be a developmental phenomenon, and the change may already be beginning to occur. Nevertheless a concerted effort must now be made at the school board level to prepare regular classroom teachers to provide for exceptional students integrated into their classrooms.

The Delivery System

If the generally accepted assertion in Canada that "every exceptional child has the right to be part of the mainstream to the extent to which it is profitable" is to be more than a rhetorical statement, the system of special education in Canada must undergo significant change in organizational structure and function during the coming years. If special education is not to remain a separate entity and yet must still retain its identity in the interests of exceptional pupils, a subtle but important shift in emphasis is essential in the education system as a whole. In order to de-emphasize the "mystique" that still surrounds special education, and the "over to you" attitude that some board officials and teachers have towards special educators, special education must become supportive services. Ministry and board policies must be revised to reflect this change in focus.

The Academically Gifted and the Artistically Talented

In a sense, the academically gifted sit uneasily in special education. All other categories of exceptionality relate to disability or handicap. Despite the efforts of some parents of gifted children to prove that their children are disadvantaged (i.e., understimulated and therefore vulnerable to learning and behavioral problems) gifted children are, in the main, the elite in our educational system. In some Provinces, artistically

talented children receive special education along with gifted children but in others they are excluded from special education. In some cases, school boards, believing that the Provincial Ministry is splitting hairs, have established their own schools, without special provincial funding, for artistically talented students. These are the children who are likely to become the leading transmitters of our culture - the bright lights in dance, drama, music and the visual arts.

If these Provinces are truly committed to excellence, they must review their policies (or absence of them) towards the artistically talented. We cannot afford not to provide the best opportunities for those children who are capable of making use of them. Special schools for the visual and performing arts provide goals for all children to strive for. They should receive the provincial recognition and support they deserve.

Preschool Provision

This is the other core issue I referred to earlier. It is a basic weakness of most provincial education systems that provision is not made for the majority of children with special needs to receive educational assistance earlier than 5 years of age. In areas such as language and speech, children can learn more before the age of 3 than at any time in their lives. In Ontario, provision is made for hearing-handicapped children who have attained the age of 2 years to be admitted to special education programs for the hearing-handicapped, but this is an anomaly based on tradition. It is astonishing, however, anomaly or not, that such preferential provision for the hearing impaired has not been used as a precedent to secure earlier provision for exceptional children with other types of handicaps. A short-sighted view of this issue would see cost as the prohibitive factor, but the downward extension of educational programs and services for children with handicaps cannot be denied on this basis since there is compelling evidence that early intervention and stimulation will save later, and more costly, provision. Initial evidence from Head Start, and other early intervention and stimulation programs, while not conclusive, suggested that they were potentially the "most effective programs governments can sponsor." This has been confirmed by later results.

In 1978, the American Association for the Advancement of Science published the results of new evidence about the effectiveness of early intervention programs. On the basis of 96 major studies of longitudinal experiments and Head Start program evaluations, it was concluded that early intervention appears to have dramatic effects in the assignment of children to special education classes and on retention in grade, enabling them to maintain their position in the regular classroom. Other "sleeper" effects, which did not show up markedly in the initial studies, were IQ and achievement gains and gains in emotional adjustment. Further, the evidence from Project Follow-Through is that high-quality educational interventions for children from

low-income backgrounds can be designed to achieve and maintain developmental gains over long periods of time, and that such programs should be extended as required during the whole developmental period of the economically disadvantaged child.

The success of such programs for economically disadvantaged children strongly suggests that they would be of significant benefit to handicapped children, many of whom are, additionally, economically disadvantaged. If the results from Head Start were replicated in Canada for exceptional children, this would bring about a downward shift in resources towards the preschool years rather than a new allocation of funding in order to provide early intervention and stimulation programs. The related saving in human suffering would suggest initiating such programs as the best investment a humane society could make.

Such a development would move special education provision in Canada from a basically restorative approach to a preventive approach. A number of procedural and "territorial" issues would require resolution in order to permit this to occur. However, the case of the hearing impaired in Ontario and the early childhood services program in Alberta indicates that this is possible. Preschool special education provision is an issue that the Provincial Ministries should open to public discussion and seek to implement at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

If such a bold step is not taken, the gains that we have made during the past decade in Canada will become the highest point in our achievement. This achievement has not been insignificant, but in comparison with what we could achieve through a concerted, nationwide commitment to early intervention, it is like being satisfied with scaling Annapurna when we could, in fact, have a good crack at Everest itself. Of all the issues I have attempted to address, it is the most important, and it is the one with which I wish to conclude this paper in the hope that "the last will become first."